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Testimony before Appropriations Committee

My name is Stephanie Mackie.

I am 47 years old and had a major stroke and a heart attack. I was homeless for three years until I went into transitional living at the YWCA. I lived on the transitional floor and did everything I was supposed to do and was moved up to the permanent floor, the eighth floor. Then I had three open heart surgeries in one year and was very ill and very weak. I couldn't even feed myself.

Where I lived was better than being homeless but I was being victimized. I was beaten up; my money was stolen. Because my money was stolen, I was almost evicted for non payment of rent. CLRP represented me to work out that case, which was 6 or 7 years ago. That is how we started.

I turned my life around and stopped bothering with anyone and started working on getting a better place to live. However, where I lived, if anyone got into any disagreements, both parties would be given “tickets” and be at risk of eviction. CLRP helped me when I received those automatic notices (for getting beaten up!).

During that time, things came up, so CLRP helped me get reasonable accommodations for delivery of meals on wheels, medication delivery, a broken hand code for me to get into the building. I also learned from them how to handle some of these things myself.

CLRP also helped me keep my voucher when I was trying to move, but got too sick to complete the process and the agency acted as if I had withdrawn from the whole program.

Then CLRP showed me when a Section 8 voucher came up. I applied for it and received it. That move was complicated by my history and again, CLRP was there to help me request and receive an accommodation. Just their being at a meeting helped convince my new landlord to take me. Now I have a beautiful and much safer apartment. I thought that when I finally moved to my new home, and that I would not need a lawyer. But it turned out that the intercom system in my new place did not work and with my health issues, I could not walk the long

long long hall to let my staff in. I finally contacted CLRP and they contacted the landlord's lawyer and the system was repaired the next week.

I don't know what the future holds for me, but if CLRP is not there for me, I am worried about my housing. I never want to be homeless again. I have come so far and I don't want to lose what I have gained in my life. Please restore the funding to Connecticut Legal Rights Project.